



Citizen Attitudes and Public Opinion Survey Results - Summer 2014

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City of Springboro

Citizen Attitudes and Public Opinion Survey

Final Report - November 2014

Acknowledgements

This report represents the findings of 414 responses to the City of Springboro Citizen Attitudes and Public Opinion Survey conducted in the Summer of 2014. These data represent a snapshot of the views concerning a variety of issues in Springboro at this time. City officials may find the data useful on three levels. First, general views about the delivery and quality of the services provided to residents may be valuable in long range planning efforts. Second, residents' views and ratings of specific conditions provide baseline data for continued benchmarking and ongoing evaluation. Third, as a comparison with the results from similar surveys conducted in 2008 and 2011. We are pleased to have again worked with Springboro officials on a survey project. City Manager Chris Thompson and Assistant City Manager Chris Pozzuto provided valuable input into the development and administration of this survey project.

The following individuals comprised the survey project team:

Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University:


- Dr. Philip A. Russo, Jr., Director
- Dr. Mark H. Morris, Sr. Project Manager
- Dr. Bryan W. Marshall, Faculty Research Associate
- Undergraduate Public Administration students Jacob Fryman, Caren Kay, Jonathan Fox, Laura Smith, and Anna Swanson provided assistance with the development, production, data entry, and data analysis of this survey.

City of Springboro:

- Christine Thompson, City Manager
- Chris Pozzuto, Assistant City Manager

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University engages in applied research, technical assistance services, training and education, and data base development in the areas of public management and capacity building, local government economic development and planning, and public program evaluation and policy research. The Center's activities are funded by external grants and contracts from a number of different funding sources.

Respectfully,



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Professor, Political Science, Miami University

Springboro City Council

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Mayor



Jim Chmiel
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Christine Thompson, City Manager
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Executive Summary

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs (CPMRA) at Miami University conducted a citizen attitudes and public opinion survey for the City of Springboro during the 2014 summer months. Similar surveys were conducted in Springboro by the CPMRA in 2008 and 2011. With only minor modifications, the 2014 survey instrument was similar to the ones used in 2008 and 2011. Using a consistent survey instrument has allowed us to collect longitudinal data from residents over a six year period.

The survey instrument was mailed to a sample of residential households in Springboro in July 2014. Below is a brief summary of the key findings from the survey results. The total response rate to this survey was 34.5%. The response rate is calculated using the total number of residential households in the sample (1,250) less vacant households (29), undeliverable addresses (21). This yields a net 1,200 usable residential households.

Total Number of Households	5,989
Number of Net Households Mailed	1,200
Number of Households Responding	414
Response Rate	34.5%
Confidence Interval @ 95%	± 4.7%

In 2008, the sample included 2,000 households and resulted in over 800 responses. In 2011 and 2014, we lowered the sample to 1,250 to reduce total survey production costs without significantly reducing validity. The smaller samples still yield highly reliable data from which total population generalizations can be inferred. The 2014 response rate of 34.5% was lower than the 43.3% response rate in 2011. However, the confidence intervals remain similar at 4.1% and 4.7% in 2011 and 2014 respectively.

Key Findings

- More than half (57%) of the respondents have lived in Springboro for more than ten years.
- Respondent ages ranged from 25 to 93 with an average of 54 years old and a median age of 53.
- Nine out of ten respondents are either very satisfied (47%) or satisfied (48%) with living in Springboro.
- The small correlation between satisfaction and years of residency found in 2008 have disappeared in the more recent surveys. This means that the level of satisfaction does not appreciably differ with the number of years in residency.
- When asked "what they like about living in Springboro", 56% of the positive responses identified various "quality of life" indicators.
- When asked "what they dislike about living in Springboro", 28% of the negative responses identified growth and development issues.
- When compared with 2011 results, there is a four percent increase in respondents who are happy and intend to stay in Springboro (67% vs 71%).
- Respondents have a mixed opinion about adding bike lanes to S.R. 73 when it is repaved, 41.3% support adding lanes while 40.6% oppose adding lanes and 18% have no opinion.
- More than half of the respondents indicated their satisfaction with the results of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan adopted in 2013.
- Satisfaction with the Police Department improved versus 2011 levels (75% vs 83%).
- Satisfaction levels with parks and recreation facilities also saw increases versus 2008 and 2011.
- The *Springboro City Notes* newsletter remains the preferred source for City news and information at 72%, however that is a decrease from the 2011 level of 80%. The City internet website increased from 39% in 2008 to 42% in 2012 and to 44% in 2014.
- Local newspapers as a source of City news and information continues to be in free-fall, 48% in 2008, 32% in 2011, and only 22% in 2014.

Introduction

The City of Springboro is located in Warren County¹, Ohio. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 Population Totals², Springboro has a total population of 17,409 residents. This represents a population increase of 41% since the 2000 census.

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University conducted a mail survey for the City of Springboro during the summer months in 2014. This survey was similar to ones conducted for the City in 2008 and 2011. The objectives remained the same across all three surveys, to collect: 1) *"general attitudes regarding the quality of life as well as growth and development in Springboro,"* and 2) *"attitudes toward the services provided to the residents of Springboro including street and road conditions, parks and recreational facilities, and police protection."* Council and City Staff should use these findings in conjunction with 2008 and 2011 findings to better understand changes in residents' attitudes and perceptions about life in Springboro. The results may also offer insight into both short-term and long-term planning and strategic priorities for the City.

Survey Instrument

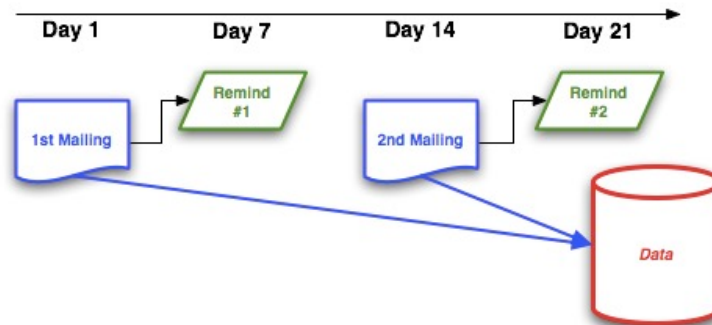
In order to create a longitudinal database, the 2008 and 2011 Springboro survey instruments were used as basis for the 2014 survey instrument. This allows us to look at changing attitudes and opinions across a six-year period. All three survey instruments were developed by staff at the CPMRA in consultation with city officials. The only significant change between the three versions was the replacement of questions about specific programs in 2008 (wayfaring signs and online tax program) and in 2011 (leaf collection and recycling). The 2014 survey asked about bicycle and pedestrian paths and lanes in Springboro. A copy of the 2014 survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

¹ See Appendix B for Warren County profile.

² <http://www.census.gov>

Survey Methodology

The CPMRA uses a modified-Dillman³ methodology for conducting mail surveys. This method has proven to increase response rates through precise design and administration techniques. Although the actual mailing time frames may vary from survey to survey. Graphically, the process looks like this.



The household mailing list used to conduct this survey was provided by the City of Springboro. This list is used by the City to mail the *Springboro City Notes* newsletter to residents every quarter. Only residential households were included in the list provided to the CPMRA.

All surveys conducted by the CPMRA are subject to review and approval by the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarships (OARS) at Miami University. In order to receive approval from OARS, the survey instrument must specifically state the rights of those who choose to participate by submitting a survey response. For the Springboro survey, respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, that they may choose not to answer any question, that only aggregated summaries of responses would be reported not individual responses, and that returning the survey served as consent to use the information it contained in the preparation of the final report. Approval of the survey instrument and methodology was granted by the OARS on June 26, 2014⁴.

³ See Dillman, Don A. 2000. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Inc.

⁴ Exempt Research Certificate Number: 01244e

In order to comply with federal regulations and Miami policies, research involving human subjects requires that researchers be familiar with the ethical issues common to such work. All researchers involved in this project were certified by the Institutional Review Board at Miami University to conduct such research.

A total of 1,250 surveys were mailed to randomly⁵ selected residential households drawn from an original list of 5,989. Each survey packet contained a survey instrument and a postage-paid return envelope. The survey instrument requested that one member of the household who is 18 years of age or older and a resident of the City complete the survey. Where there were multiple members of the household who are 18 years of age or older, we asked that the person who has the next birthday to complete the survey. The “next birthday” protocol is used to increase the likelihood of random selection within the household and reduce potential respondent bias. A reminder card was mailed approximately two weeks after the first survey packet. This process was repeated with a second survey instrument and reminder card on a similar schedule. A total of 414 usable responses were returned for a response rate of 34.5%.

The standard margin of sampling error in this survey was plus or minus 4.7% in 95 out of 100 cases. This means that if this survey was conducted 100 times, in 95 cases the results would not vary by more than 4.7% from the results had all City residents responded.

All surveys are subject to sources of error, such as bias in the wording of questions, timing, issue salience, etc. The instrument design, format, and timing were chosen to increase the response rate and minimize the bias. There is little reason to suspect that the data collection procedures used in the conduct of this survey introduced any significant bias. The findings herein can be taken confidently as an accurate reflection of respondent opinions at the time. However, these ***opinions may and do change over time***. Therefore, they reflect a snapshot of respondents’ views only at the time of this survey.

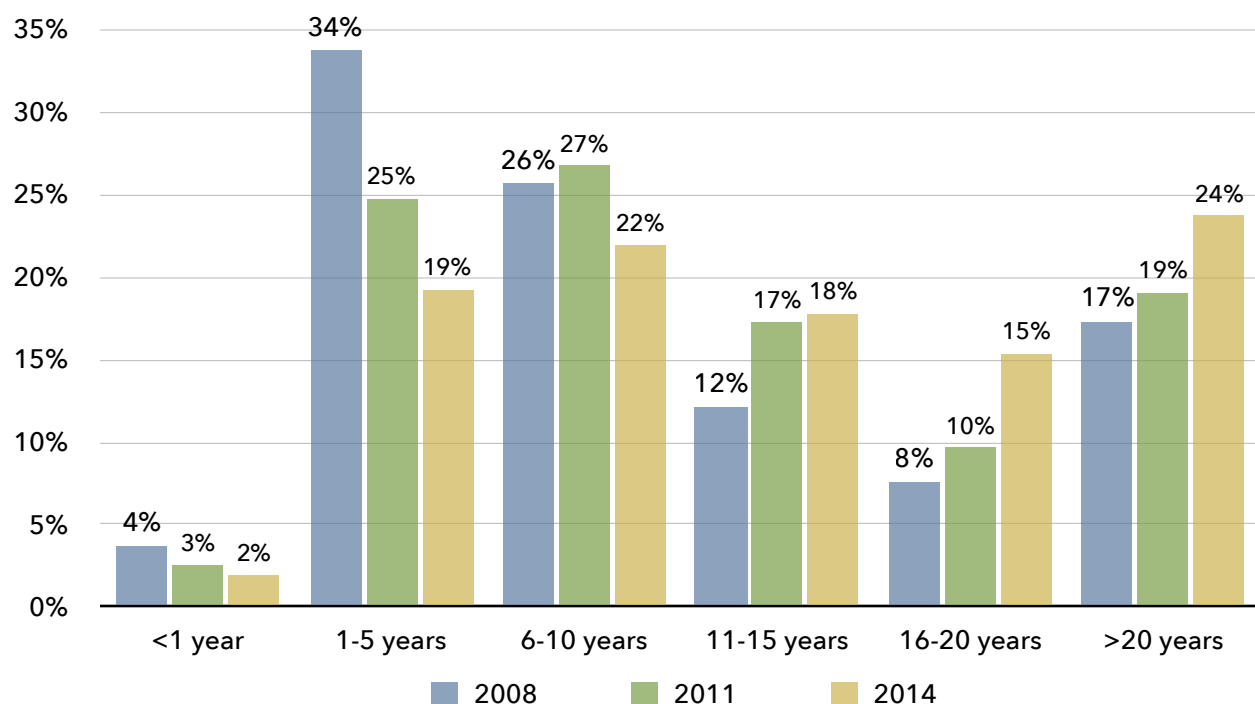
⁵ The random list was generated using SAS’s JMP Pro 11 software.

The majority of surveys returned were completed in full. However, some respondents chose not to answer parts or specific questions within the survey. Incomplete surveys were included in the database, thus some questions may have more responses than others. Some of the reported percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Survey Results and Analysis

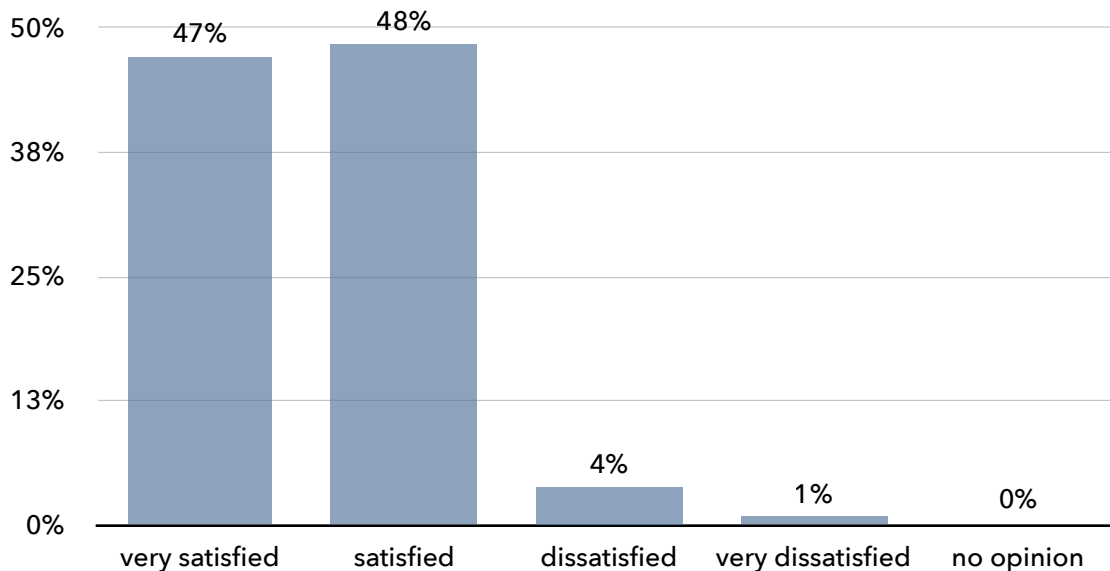
LIVING IN SPRINGBORO: Respondents were asked how long they had lived in Springboro. Respondents who have lived in Springboro more than 20 years make up the largest sub-category for this question. As the chart below indicates, we see the response rate trending away from newer residents (five years or less) to longer term residents.

How long have you lived in Springboro? (n=410)



This movement towards longer-term residents may in part explain the shift towards higher satisfaction levels with living in Springboro. The percentage of respondents who indicate they are “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” has moved from 87% in 2008, to 90% in 2011, and 95% in 2014. Perhaps more impressively is the movement in the “very satisfied” category from 31% to 30% to 47% in 2008, 2011, and 2014 respectively. While not large numbers, the percentage of dissatisfied respondents has fallen from 10% to 5% in 2014.

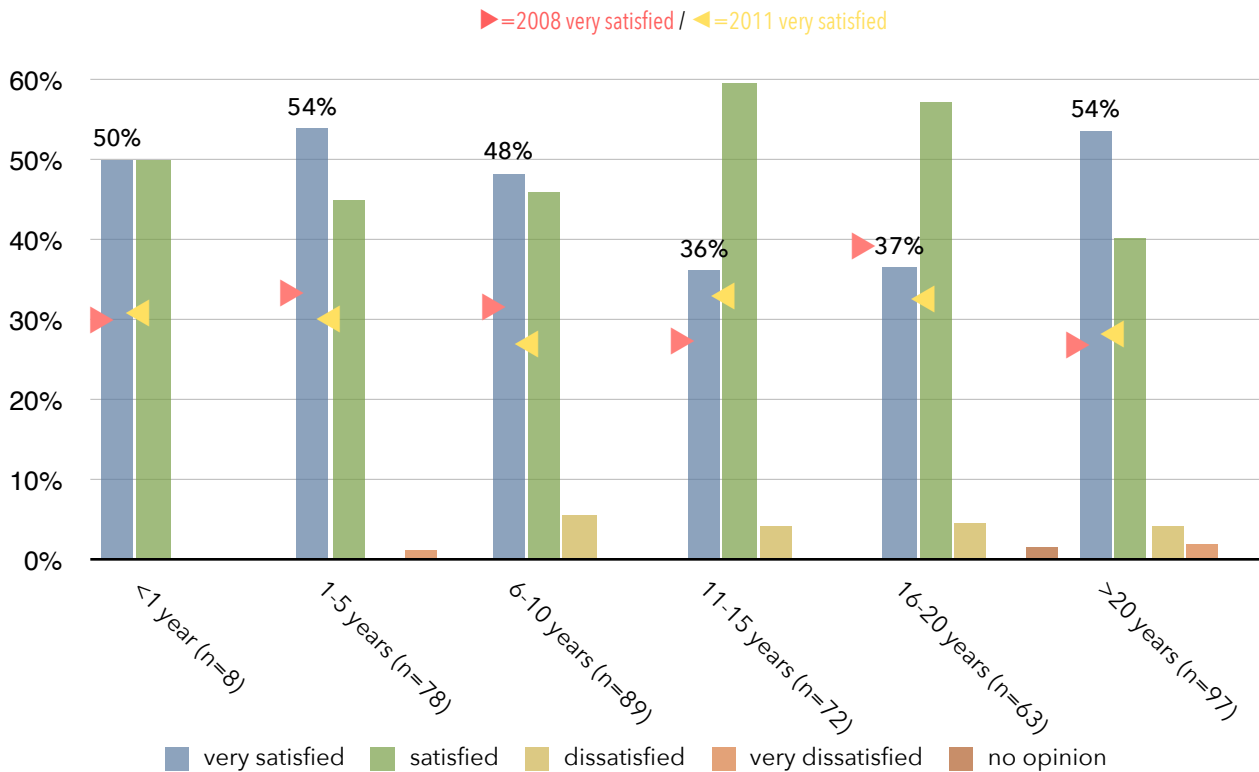
Overall, how satisfied are you with living in Springboro? (n=410)



We can take both of these variables (length of time living in Springboro and satisfaction) and cross-tabulate them to see how satisfaction may vary with respect to length of residency. As seen the chart below, residents of varying lengths of time have differing levels of satisfaction with living in Springboro. However, no group indicates any significant levels of dissatisfaction with living in Springboro. Consistent with the findings above, 2014 satisfaction levels have increased when compared with the levels found in 2008 and 2011. The chart columns reflect the 2014 results. I have added [pink triangles](#) at the 2008 levels and [yellow triangles](#) at the 2011 levels to the “very satisfied” column to show the previous survey results. We should also note that the frequency of respondents indicating dissatisfaction has all but disappeared in 2014.

Because of the trend towards respondents having longer terms of residency, we ran additional cross tabulations to further assess the relationship with respondent satisfaction levels. In 2008, there was a statistically significant (albeit weak correlation) between residents satisfaction and their years in residency. But by the 2011 and 2014 years, the correlation no longer existed—meaning the level of satisfaction didn't appreciably differ by years in residency.

Length of Residency and Satisfaction Levels (n=407)



Following the two questions about living in Springboro, respondents were asked to "identify the three qualities that you like the most about living in Springboro" and "identify the three qualities that you dislike the most about living in Springboro." These two open-ended questions resulted in over 1,800 discrete responses.

Just as we did in the two previous surveys, a research technique called content analysis was used to analyze and summarize the open-ended comments. The Government Accountability Office describes content analysis⁶ as follows:

"...a systematic research method for analyzing textual information in a standardized way that allows evaluators to make inferences about that information (Weber, 1990, pp. 9-12, and Krippendorff, 1980, pp. 21-27). Another expression of this is as follows: 'A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories' (Weber, 1990, p. 12)...To classify a document's key ideas, the

⁶ U.S. General Accounting Office (1996). *Content Analysis: A Methodology for Structuring and Analyzing Written Material*. GAO/PEMD-10.3.1. Washington, D.C.

evaluator identifies its themes, issues, topics, and so on. The result might be a simple list of the topics in a series of meeting notes. Content analysis can go further if the evaluator counts the frequency of statements, detects subtle differences in their intensity, or examines issues over time, in different situations, or from different groups...Thus, content analysis can not only help summarize the formal content of written material, it can also describe the attitudes or perceptions of the author of that material For example, if an evaluator wanted to assess the effects of a program on the lives of older people from their perspective, he or she could analyze open-ended interview responses to determine their outlook on life, loneliness, or security."

"Like" Categories. Content analysis was applied to the 1,063 "like" comments. Comments were coded into five broad categories: quality of life (56%), quality of public services (21%), proximity and location (19%), schools (11%), and other (1%). Note that totals do not add up to 100% because some comments contained multiple responses. Quality of life comments referenced: "a good range of houses, affordable to expensive," "beautiful parks," "clean well kept city," "community involvement," "community events," "low crime," "parks and entertainment," "quiet," "safe," and "small town feel."

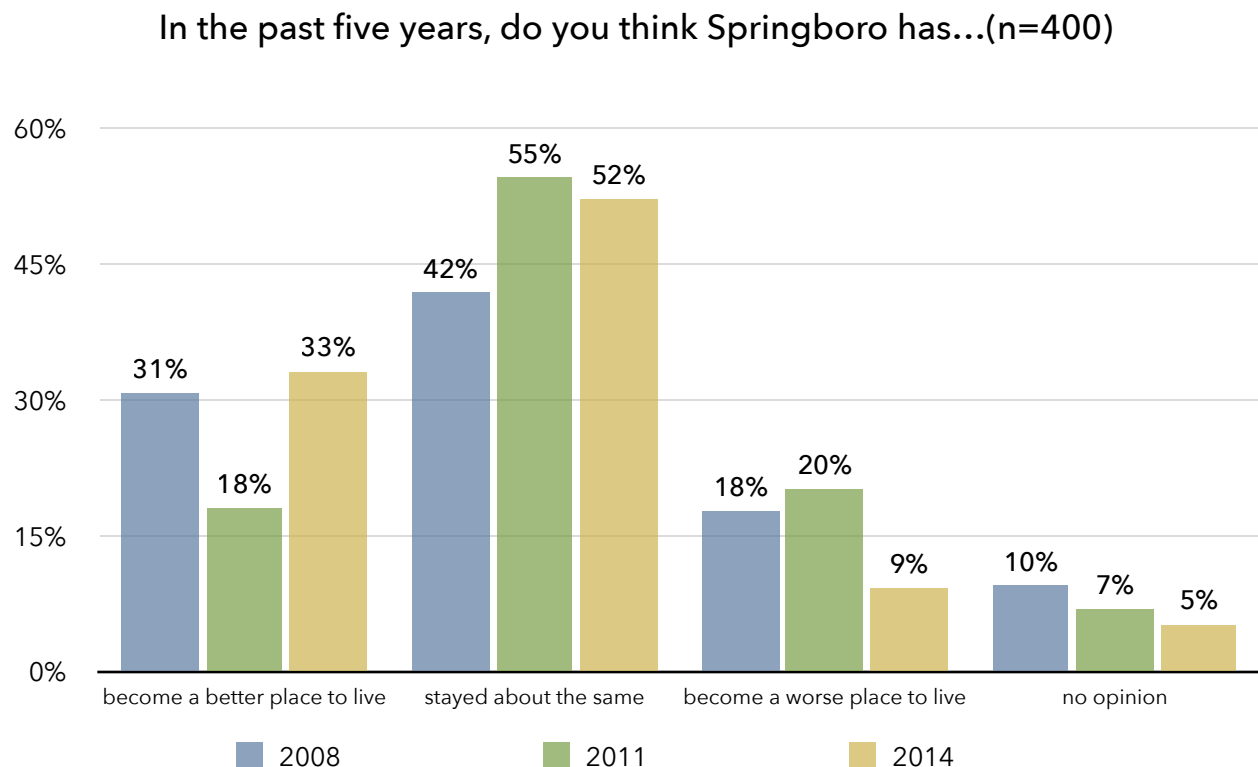
Positive comments about public services included: "good roads," "controlled building plan for future," "low taxes," "leaf pickup," "nice parks," and "snow removal."

Proximity and location comments focused on Springboro's centrality to highways, other communities, and access to retail services.

"Dislike" Categories. A total of 765 "dislike" comments were received (28% fewer than "likes"). While most of the "likes" were concentrated in two categories (quality of life and quality of public services), the "dislikes" were more spread out. Responses were coded into five categories: quality of public services (33%), quality of life (27%), growth and development (19%), taxes (12%), schools (10%).

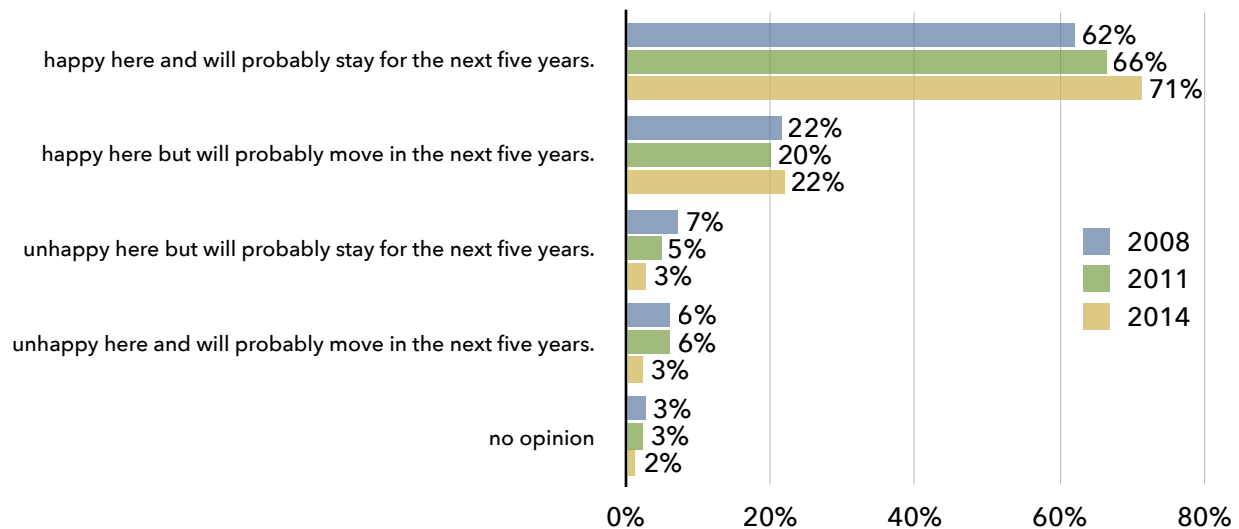
Commonly cited dislikes included: "traffic," "water and sewer rates," "income tax" and "income tax reciprocity," as well as broad dislikes such as "too much growth," and "losing small town feel."

Similar to the satisfaction levels found in previous questions, respondents now view changes in Springboro more favorably than in 2008 and 2011. More respondents (33%) feel Springboro has become a “better place to live,” while slightly fewer respondents (52%) feel it has “stayed about the same.” The percentage who think Springboro has “become a worse place to live” has fallen to 9%, less than half the level reported in 2008 and 2011.



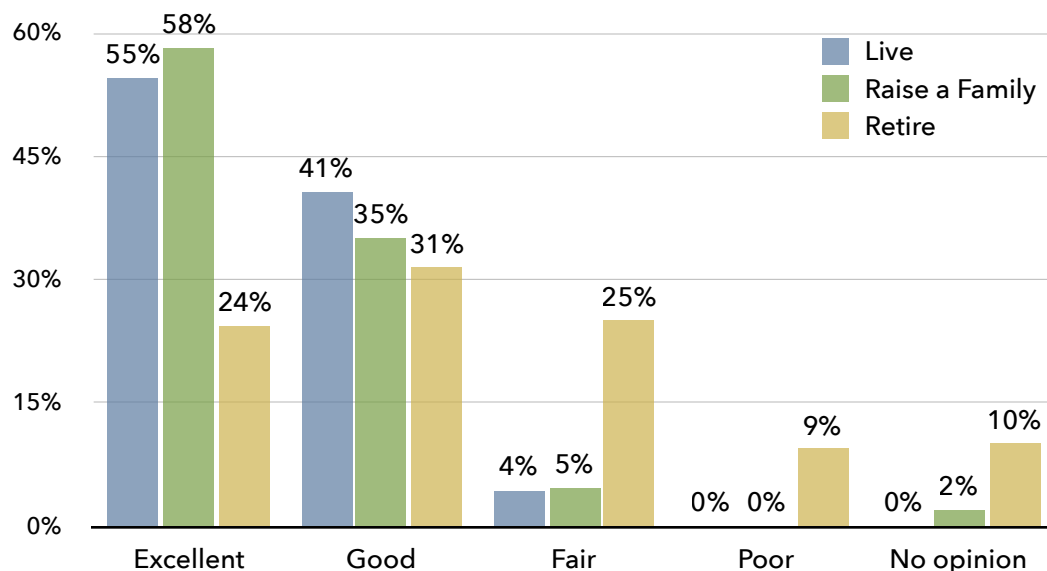
While the opinions in the prior question asked respondents to look back in time, we also want to get a sense of how respondents viewed their short-term future. So we asked them to consider looking ahead five years and select a statement that best describes how they feel about Springboro. Over the past six years, the trend continues to move towards respondents feeling “happy here and will probably stay for the next five years.” This is significant for City policy makers as they look to the future and make plans to meet the needs of current residents who indicate an intention to stay here.

Which best describes how you feel about Springboro? (n=408)



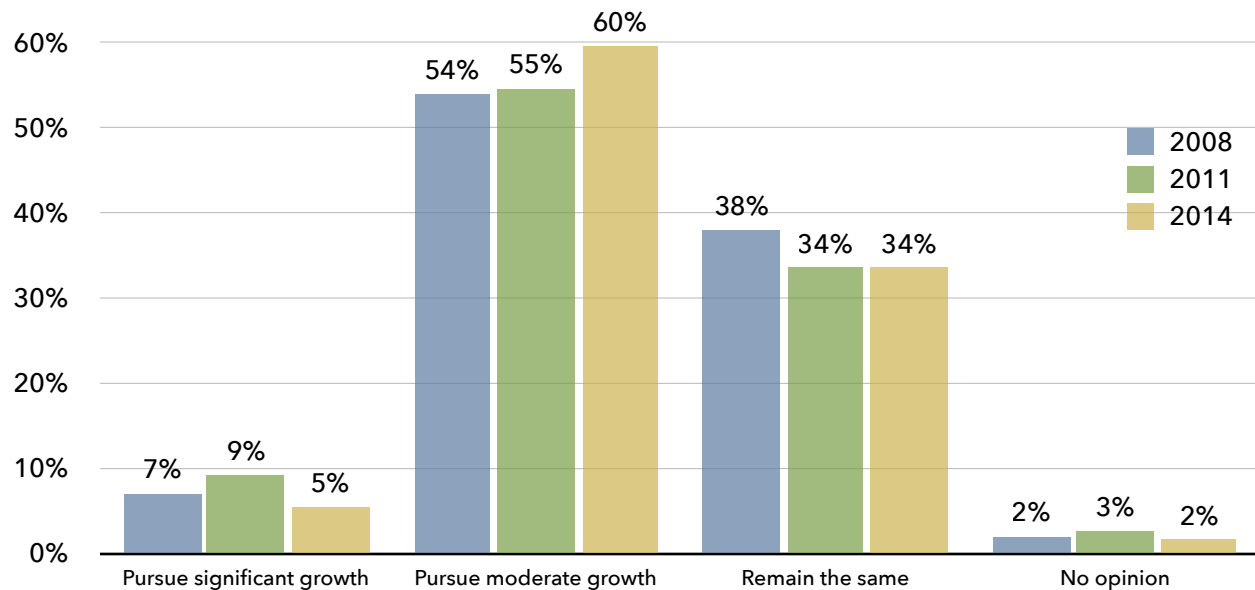
We then asked respondents to evaluate Springboro as a place to live, raise a family, and retire. More than nine out of ten respondents indicated that Springboro was an excellent or good place to “live” and “raise a family.” These results are up 8% and 6% when compared with 2008 and 2011 respectively. As a place to retire, three out of ten rated Springboro “fair” or “poor.” These results compare very favorably with 2008 (58% “fair” or “poor”) and 2011 (50% “fair” and “poor”).

How would you rate Springboro as a place to... (n=408)



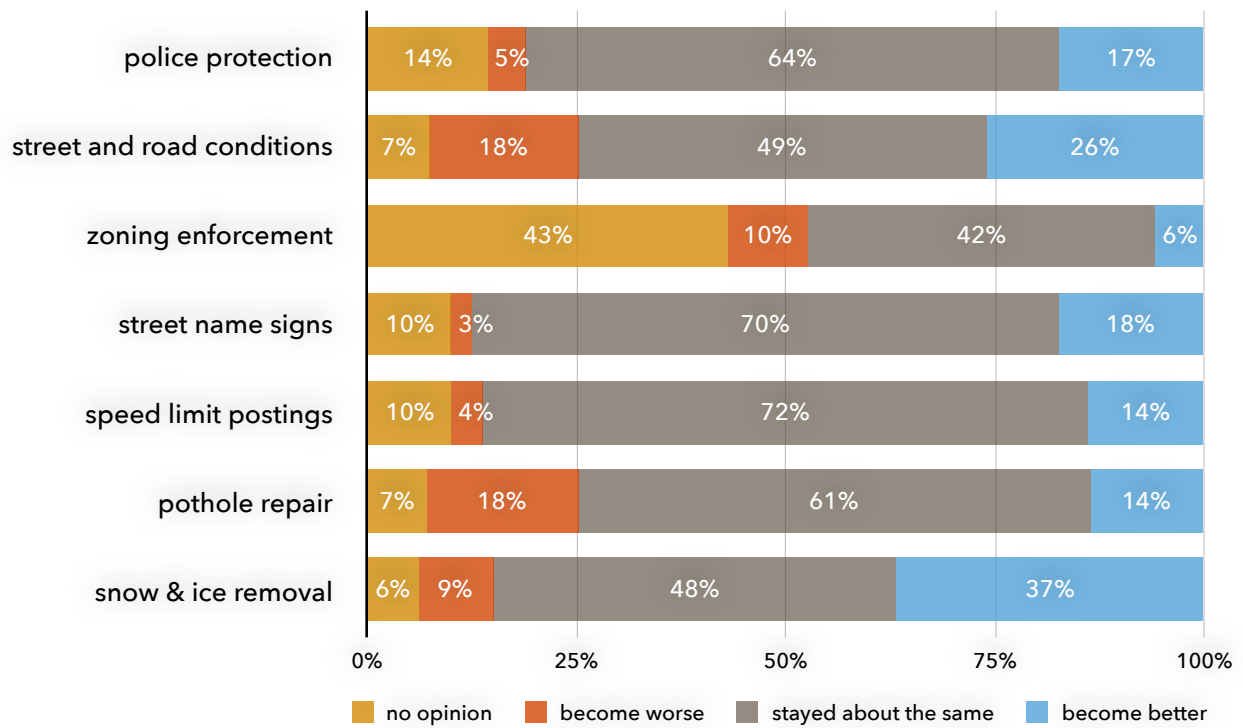
Attitudes towards growth and development remained fairly consistent with previous survey results. There was a small shift in attitudes from “pursue significant growth” to “pursue moderate growth.”

**When imagining Springboro five years from now,
do you think the City should... (n=406)**

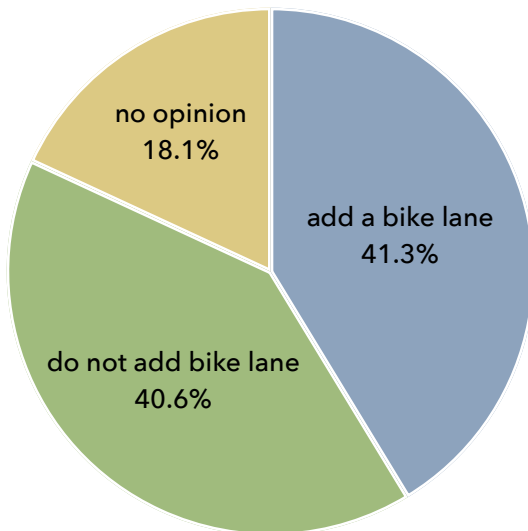


CITY SERVICES: The same set of city services used in 2008 and 2011 were also used in 2014 and results remain virtually unchanged. Respondents were asked to indicate whether a particular city service had “become better,” “stayed about the same,” or “become worse” over the past three years. What we hope to see in the following chart are large blue bars (become better) and small orange bars (become worse). As we saw in 2011, all seven city services listed had at least five out of ten respondents indicate the service has “stayed about the same.”

Over the past three years, have the following services... (n=varies)
 (note: prefer to see **large blue bars** and **small orange bars**)

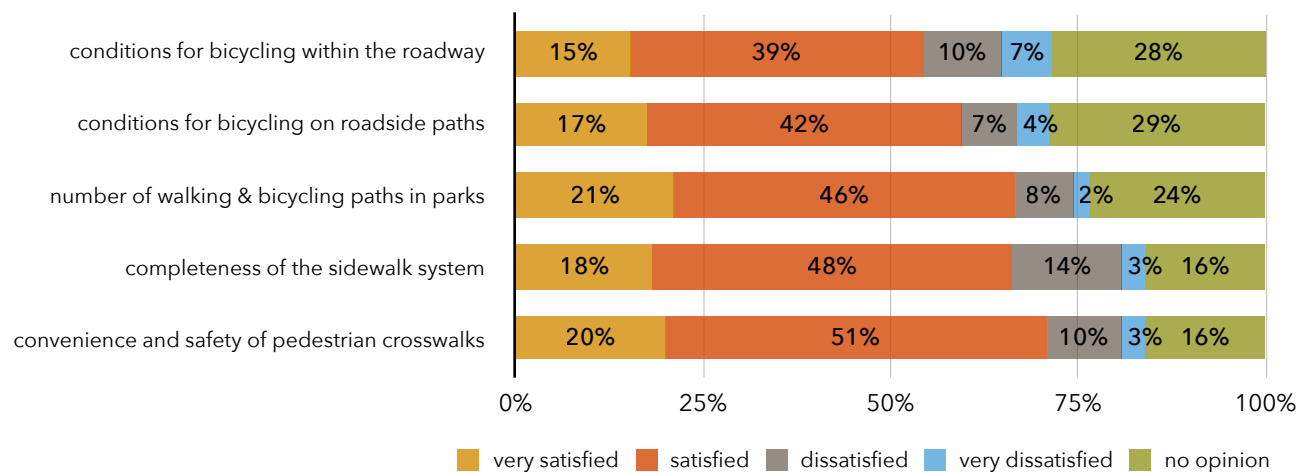


In each of the preceding surveys, we included a set of questions focused on a specific item or issue. In 2008, we asked about new wayfaring signs and interactive online tax program for citizens. In 2011, we asked about new leaf collection and recycling programs. The 2014 survey included a set of questions regarding bike lanes and paths in Springboro. Respondents were first asked whether a bike lane should be added to SR 73 when it is repaved in 2015. At this time, opinions are evenly split on this question (n=409).



A second question asked for satisfaction levels related to the bike and pedestrian paths in Springboro.

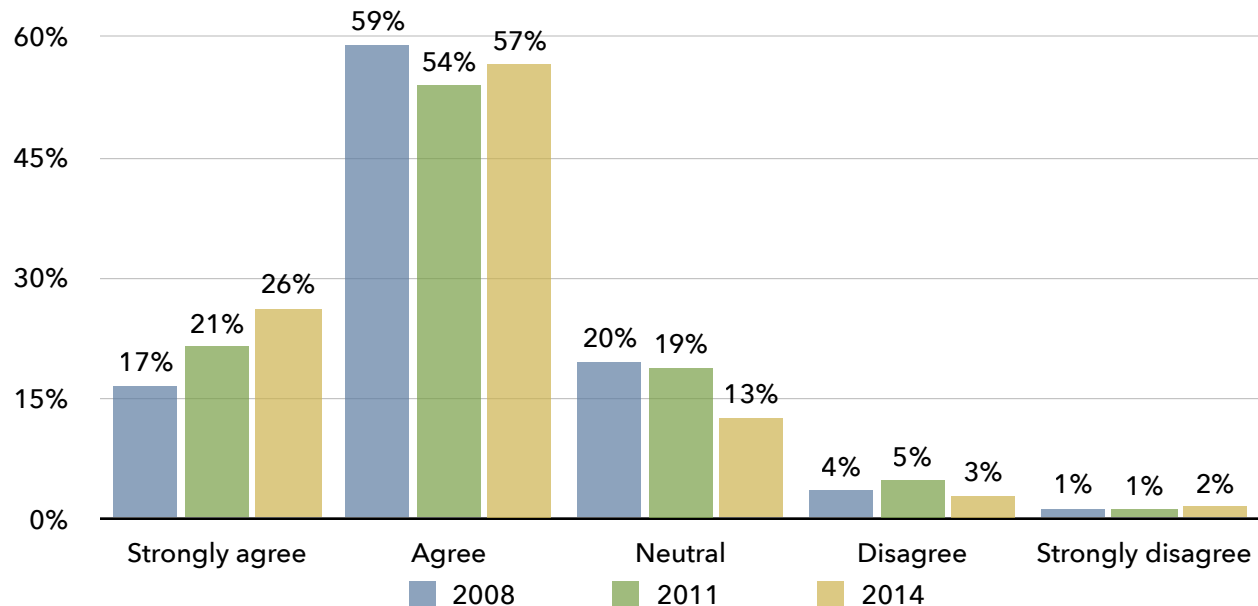
The City of Springboro adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 2013. How satisfied are you with the following: (n=391 to 395)



Respondents also provide 165 comments about bicycle and pedestrian facilities within Springboro. Content analysis was used to review and categorized these additional comments. The comments were divided with 44% classified as positive, 48% as negative, and 8% as neutral. Positive comments supported additional bike and walking paths in Springboro, for example, “need more” and “the more the better.” Negative comments typically mentioned cost and safety concerns, for example, “bike lanes not safe,” “keep off roadways,” and “waste of tax dollars.”

PUBLIC SAFETY: Satisfaction with the current level of police protection continued in a positive direction when compared with 2008 and 2011 results. There was additional upward movement in the “very satisfied” category and downward movement in the “neutral” category. Those who “disagree” and “strongly disagree” remain relatively low and unchanged across all three surveys.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I am satisfied with the current level of police protection provided by the Springboro Police Department." (n=410)



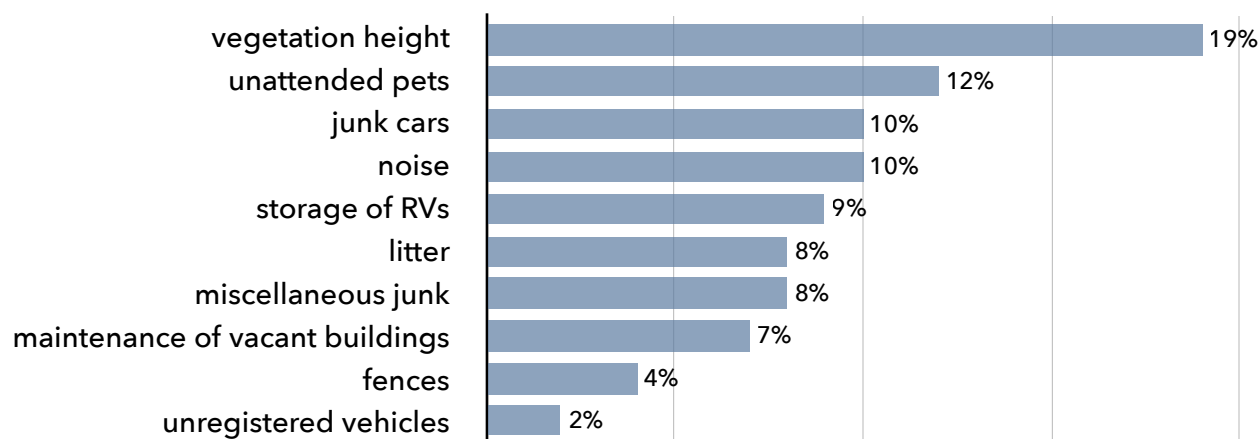
Respondent satisfaction levels with specific police services generally improved over prior levels. "Very satisfied" levels increased while "dissatisfied" levels decreased. It is important to note that 68% of respondents indicated having "no contact" with the Springboro Police in the past 12 months.

Satisfaction with various police services	Very Satisfied			Satisfied			Dissatisfied			Very Dissatisfied			No Opinion		
	08	11	14	08	11	14	08	11	14	08	11	14	08	11	14
On-duty patrol	20%	18%	33%	57%	55%	48%	6%	6%	4%	3%	2%	1%	15%	18%	14%
response time	18%	18%	30%	36%	32%	34%	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%	2%	40%	45%	32%
community outreach	12%	14%	27%	47%	41%	37%	5%	5%	4%	5%	3%	5%	31%	37%	27%
school programs	16%	16%	25%	36%	33%	30%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	40%	45%	40%

When provided with a list of police services that could be improved, as was the case in 2008, only two of the services reached a double digit response rate (more cruiser patrol and improved general community outreach both at 16%). Overall, respondents indicated satisfaction with the job being done by the Springboro Police Department.

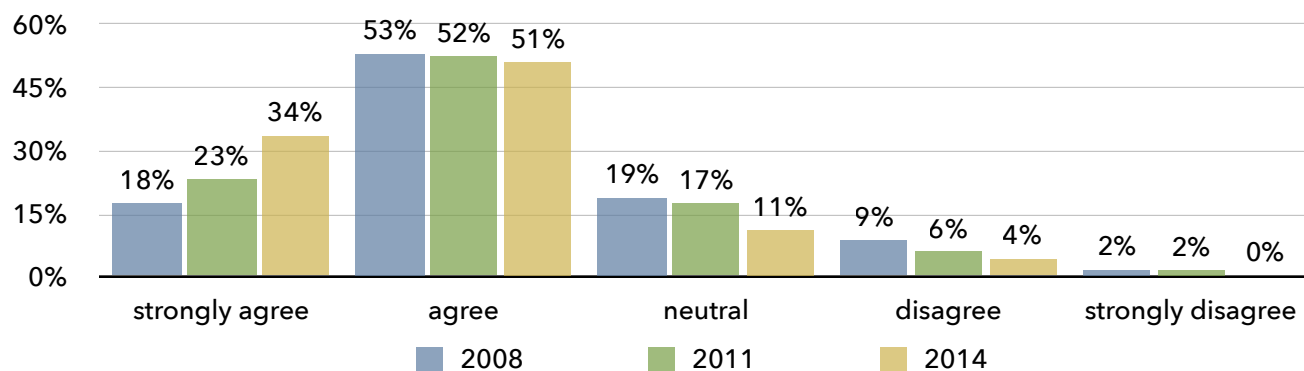
CODE ENFORCEMENT: Given a list of ten public nuisances “not adequately addressed,” none produced any large number of concerns from the 414 total respondents. This is similar to prior surveys and continues to suggest there are no significant code enforcement problems for the City.

Which of the following public nuisances, if any, do you believe Springboro has not adequately addressed?
(% of total respondents who selected each nuisance)



PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES - Overall satisfaction levels with parks and recreation facilities has seen a strong positive shift since 2008.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: “I am satisfied with the current level of parks and recreation facilities provided by the City of Springboro.” (n=397)



When asked to consider how the parks and recreation facilities in Springboro had changed over the past three years, both North Park and North Park Amphitheater saw the largest percentage of “become better.” Unfortunately, a large number of respondents (half or more) indicated “no opinion” for most of the facilities listed.

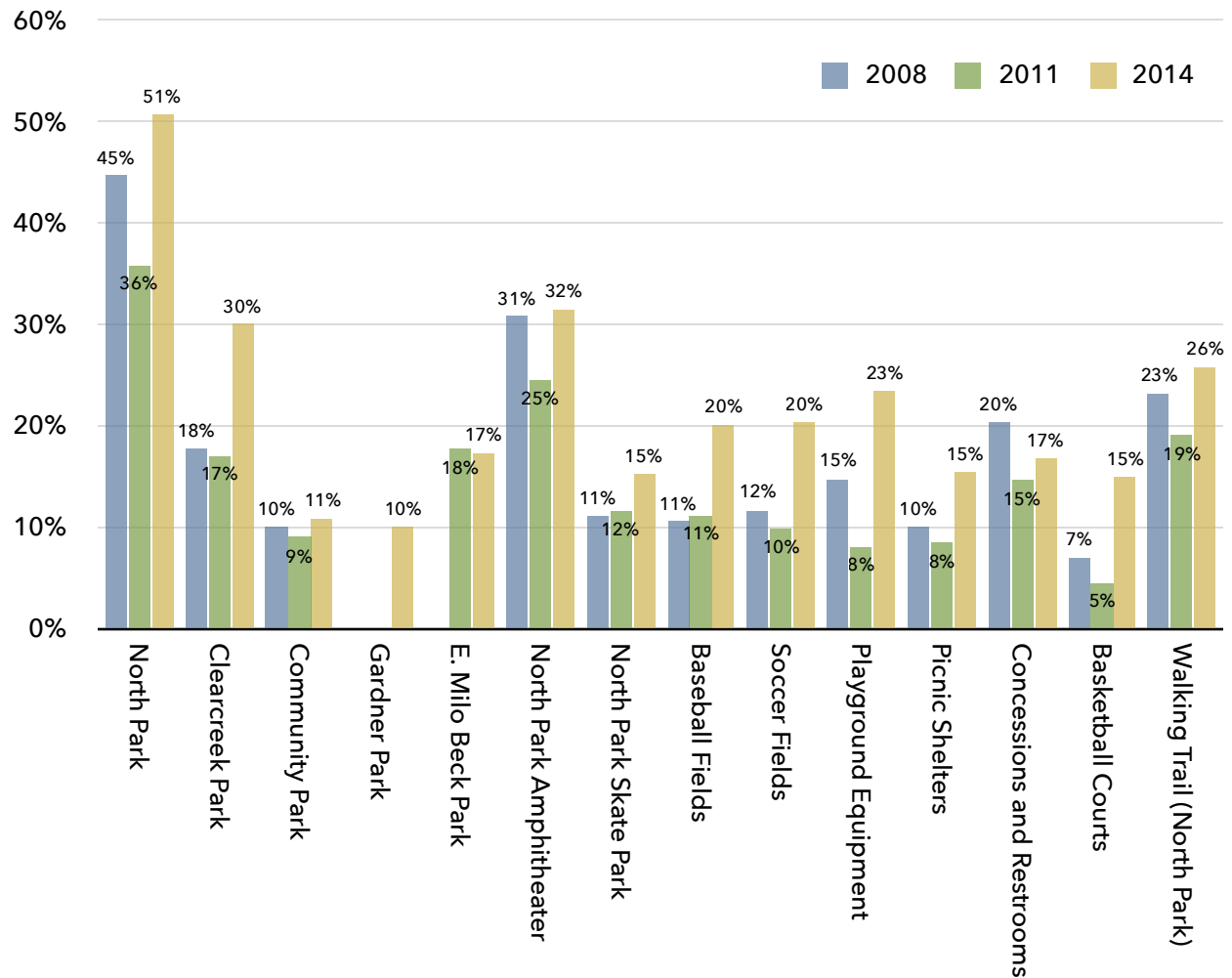
Over the past three years, have the following parks and recreation facilities...
(n=varies)

Parks and Recreation Facilities	become better	stayed the same	become worse	no opinion
North Park	50.7%	21.7%	1.0%	20.5%
Clearcreek Park	30.0%	24.1%	0.6%	45.3%
Community Park	10.9%	25.9%	2.1%	61.2%
Gardner Park	10.0%	23.3%	1.2%	65.2%
E. Milo Beck Park	17.3%	24.6%	0.6%	57.4%
North Park Amphitheater	31.5%	34.0%	1.4%	33.1%
North Park Skate Park	15.2%	17.9%	3.6%	63.2%
Baseball Fields	20.1%	23.0%	2.0%	54.9%
Soccer Fields	20.3%	26.2%	1.7%	51.7%
Playground Equipment	23.4%	29.5%	3.2%	43.9%
Picnic Shelters	15.4%	37.4%	3.4%	43.7%
Concessions and Restrooms	16.8%	36.4%	5.4%	41.5%
Basketball Courts	14.9%	25.7%	2.9%	56.4%
Walking Trail (North Park)	25.8%	41.6%	2.2%	30.4%

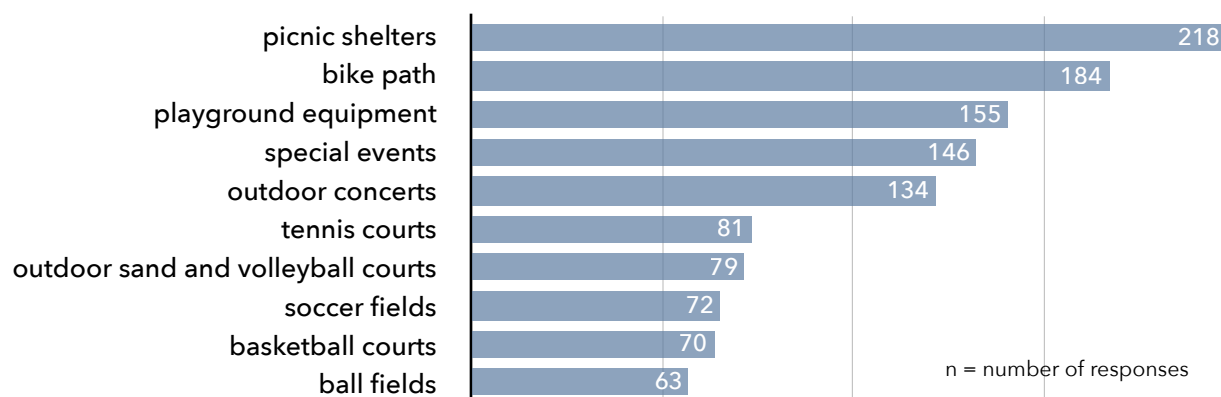
The chart below shows only the “become better” results from 2008, 2011, and 2014. Many of the parks and facilities in Springboro have seen significant movement in this category in the 2014 results. City leaders can take pride in

their efforts to improve and expand the parks and recreation available to the citizens of Springboro.

Over the past three years, have the following parks and recreation facilities become better?
(n=varies)

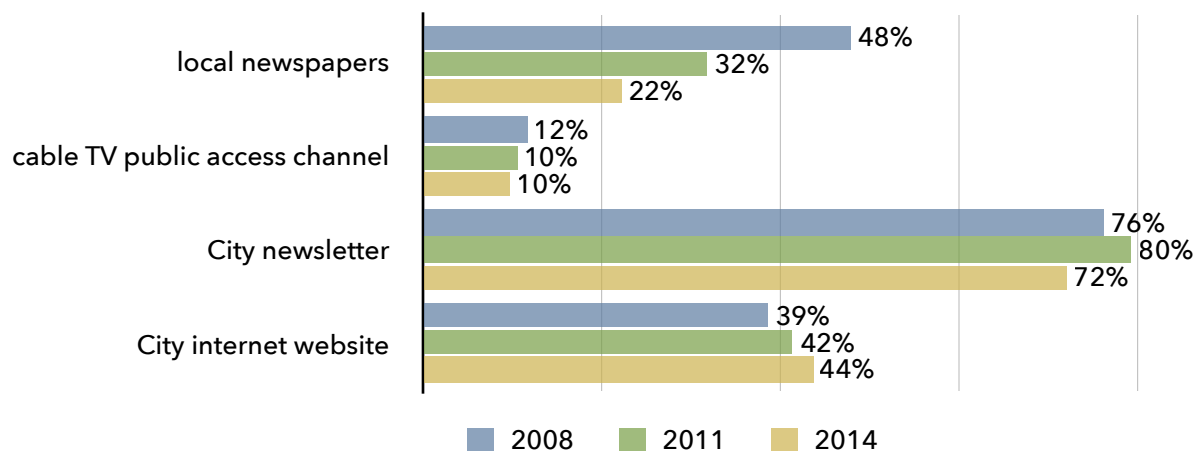


One final question asked respondents their views on what they would like to see in the new park being developed jointly with the City of Franklin.



CITY COMMUNICATIONS - All three surveys have looked to provide City officials guidance on the type communication most preferred and used by citizens. Citizens do not routinely attend City Council meetings. Nearly nine out of ten respondents (87%) indicated they had not attended a City Council meeting in the past two years. The City newsletter continues to be the primary communication vehicle between City government and respondents. However, we continue to see usage of the City website increasing with each survey. As noted in 2011, local newspapers continue to lose ground as a useful communication source for official City news and information.

When you think about the official information you receive concerning City news, meetings, and events, from what sources would you prefer to receive this information? Please check all that apply. (n=414)



DEMOGRAPHICS - We collected a number of demographic details to better understand the respondent population. Respondent age ranged from 25 to 93 with an average age of 54 years old. While the average age remains within a four year span (50-54) over the three surveys, the median age has increased six years in comparison with 2011. We also saw a gender shift in 2014 back to levels recorded in 2008. The chart below compares survey respondents with U.S. Census data⁷ and prior survey results. While there continue to be some differences between the respondent pool and the general population of Springboro, these differences are not uncommon in surveys of this type. Married homeowners tend to respond at a higher rate than single renters resulting in some over- and under-representation of these population segments. This was the case in in all three surveys. Households with minor children continues to be somewhat under-represented in the 2011 and 2014 samples. Despite these variances, the survey techniques used allow us to have high confidence in the findings as presented in this report. As with all surveys, decision makers should understand the limitations of this type analysis and use the information accordingly.

Category	2010 Census	2008	2011	2014
Male	48.9%	42.1%	48.9%	41.3%
Female	51.1%	57.9%	51.1%	58.7%
Age in years (mean)	-	53	50	54
Age in years (median)	37	51	47	53
Married	67%	82%	78%	80%
Single (never divorced)	18%	3%	4%	3%
Single (divorced)	10%	10%	9%	9%
Surviving spouse	5%	6%	9%	7%
HHs with minor children	48%	45%	36%	35%
Home ownership	86%	96%	94%	96%

⁷ 2010 Census was used where available.

Additional Comments

The final section of the survey provided space for respondents to “comment on any of the services included in this survey as well as any other comments you would like to share with City officials.” In 2008, 52% of the respondents provided additional comments. In 2011, only 35% of the respondents provided additional comments. In 2014, 41% of the respondents offered additional comments.

Content analysis was used to evaluate the 169 comments received from respondents. The additional comments were coded as positive (37%), negative (34%) and requests for more services (27%). There were also a small number of comments referencing the school system (2%). These additional comments were mostly reinforcing views expressed in the like and dislike questions discussed previously. Thus, positive comments reinforced satisfaction with the quality of life and public services in Springboro. While negative comments focused on taxation and dissatisfaction with public services. Comments coded as “wants” requested increases in many of the public services including parks, police, and road repairs.

Conclusion

City officials can be pleased with the findings of the 2014 survey. As we have noted after prior surveys, these surveys provides city officials with a current assessment of general attitudes regarding the quality of life in Springboro as well as attitudes towards the many city services provided to residents. When coupled with 2008 and 2011 results, city officials also have a basis for comparison to consider change over time. As these results indicate, attitudes and opinions do vary and have changed over time. This should reinforce the value of collecting longitudinal data and fully understanding the limitations of a single point in time measurement. Considering the changed state of the economy since 2008, city officials can be very pleased with the 2014 findings. Overall, residents are generally satisfied with the public services provided and with living in Springboro as a community.